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THE CALL OF LORD KITCHENER.

BY ANGLO-INDIAN.

WHEN the Prime Minister tells us that the problem of the defence of the British Empire is the defence of the borders of Afghanistan, he strikes a note which may jar on the ears of the insular kingdom, and vibrate uneasily through the vast Empire of India. It awakens us to the fact that sea-power is no longer sufficient; that the doom of all Continental nations has at last fallen on the careless expansion of Great Britain; and that we are coming face to face with the phantom of conscription. The problem is as old as our Indian Empire itself. It has been the subject of the controversies of the Lawrence and the Forward schools; it has been the riddle of our statesmen and our great soldiers; it has been exaggerated and belittled, but it is regrettably persistent, and cannot be shelved. Mr. Balfour is absolutely accurate in his description of the problem. It is the defence of the British Empire, and this imperial fact will not be forgotten when the question of ways and means has to be considered. But Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener, who are striving to solve and not to shelve the problem, will as practical men devote themselves to its local aspect, which is, primarily, the defence of India against Russian aggression.

Of late, the old controversy has been hushed, and the policy on the northwestern frontier of India has been an honest effort toward military concentration as against diffusion, and toward tribal conciliation in place of exasperation. The spirit of military adventure, which was once supposed to inspire our frontier officers, has disappeared, exorcised by the knowledge that excursions over the boundary were fraught with serious consequences to the British Empire at large. Of late there has been ample food for anxious thought. The disturbances which were anticipated

when Abdur Rahman passed away have not occurred, and the Amir Habibulla still holds intact the Afghanistan which his father gripped with an iron hand. Events in the Far East have set all men thinking—Afghans, Persians, and in India the rulers and the ruled; while the strenuous activity of the Russian engineers and the approach of the Merv-Kushk and the Orenburg-



NORTHWESTERN INDIAN FRONTIER AND ADJACENT TERRITORY.

Tashkent railways to the gates of Herat, and the precincts of Mazar-i-Sharif, make us call for maps and scan closely the country north and west of Afghanistan.

Great confidence is felt in Lord Curzon's ability to neutralize the consequences of Russia's steady advance. He has practically

devoted his life to the study of the complex Eastern question, and his knowledge of the Indian frontiers is perhaps unique. He may be trusted to lose no chance, and to take no unnecessary risks. Equal confidence is felt by the British public in the Commander-in-chief of India. Lord Kitchener has won a reputation for strategy, efficiency and economy, and he too is not likely to run useless risks. We may feel sure that any scheme for the defence of India which is put forward by these two brilliant and experienced men will be comprehensive, complete; but, withal, cautious.

Our object in this article is to explain the measures which are being taken by Lord Kitchener to safeguard India from attack. He has visited the frontiers and formed his own opinions on the spot. He has personally or through his officers formed some ideas as to the comparative merits of the various races which make up his fighting strength. He is not responsible for ordnance, commissariat, transport and military works, but in his military colleague—Sir Edmond Elles—he has an able and prudent guide. By this time he has realized the financial limitations of the Government of India, and acquired some knowledge of the political situation in India and beyond her borders. He must master all these branches of knowledge before he can formulate a scheme for the defence of India.

The problem before Lord Kitchener is the defence of some 700 miles of frontier lying between Karachi and Peshawar. For a general understanding of the problem, we need only look at Peshawar leading to the Khyber pass and to Kabul; Kohat, of which the route runs to the Peiwar Kotal; the Tochi pass by which Ghuzni is approached, and the Bolan pass which runs to Quetta, Chaman (the rail head) and Kandahar. The first three lines pass through a wild, mountainous and difficult country infested by treacherous and turbulent tribesmen. Punitive expeditions, blockades, and blackmail are the methods adopted by the Indian Government for coercing or conciliating our restless neighbors, but the effect is transient; and when the boys of the last expedition have grown to be men, and the fanatic priest has been succeeded by a still more truculent *mullah*, the trouble begins afresh.

Beyond the tribes is Afghanistan—that baffling buffer-state. It is almost our own creation, for it rested with us to give or

withhold the province of Kandahar when we made Abdur Rahman Amir of Afghanistan. By money we helped him to start his administration, and by an annual subsidy of 12 lakhs* of rupees from 1883—raised ten years later to 18 lakhs—we have enabled the Amirs to carry on the difficult task of ruling perhaps the most unruly country in the world. This subsidy was for the payment of the Afghan troops, and for other measures required for the defence of the northwestern frontier of Afghanistan. At the great Rawal Pindi Durbar in 1885, the Amir Abdur Rahman said in the presence of us all that he was ready with his arms and his people to render any services that might be required of him or the Afghan nation. "As the British Government has declared that it will assist me in repelling any foreign enemy, so it is right and proper that Afghanistan should unite in the firmest manner, and stand side by side with the British Government." And with these brave words our friendly neighbor and ally returned to inscrutable Kabul, never again to set foot on Indian soil. Ten years later, so satisfied were we of our neighbor's good-will that, "wishing to see Afghanistan independent and strong, the Government of India will raise no objections to the purchase and import by His Highness of munitions of war. They will themselves grant him some help in this respect."

In dealing with Abdur Rahman, we were dealing with perhaps the most capable character that has ever paced the Oriental stage; and it was politic to give him a blank check, and to trust to his self-interest to spend the money on making Afghanistan strong and independent. It was, perhaps, politic to avoid too minute inquiry into the "further measures required for the defence of the northwestern frontier of Afghanistan"; but our diplomatists might have remembered that Abdur Rahman was not immortal, and that some guarantee would have proved useful, when the great Amir passed away. Our good money has gone, but we know nothing of the Afghan troops, or the defence of the northwestern frontier; and though we are responsible for the foreign relations of Afghanistan, we are in the ridiculous position of undesirable aliens or isolated outsiders at the court of Kabul. There may be the love of the friend and ally, but it is most carefully and constantly dissembled. The situation is difficult and embarrassing for the statesman. It is equally dif-

* A lakh of rupees equals about \$30,000.

ficult for the soldier. How is Lord Kitchener to defend the Afghan borders, if he is in doubt as to the real intentions of the Amir and his people? There are only two guarantees of the good faith of Afghanistan. If she wants her friend and ally to stand side by side with her against aggression from the northwest, she must make his paths straight and easy. She must construct, or allow to be constructed, railways from Chaman to Kandahar and Peshawar to Kabul, and she must connect Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif with the telegraphic system of India. In the second place she must leave the tribes on our frontier severely alone; and, if she were wise and in real earnest as to co-operation, she would join hands with us in drawing the fangs of the Afridis and the Waziris. These tribes are a constant menace to the peace of our frontier, and they will be an obstacle and peril when we advance into Afghanistan. It is greatly to be regretted that in the fighting-days of Abdur Rahman we did not earmark some part of our subsidy for the pacification of the frontier tribes. Nothing would have knit the two nations more closely than the brotherhood of arms.

If one looks at the map of Afghanistan one notices Herat, Kandahar, and Kabul. The first has been called the gate of India, but it is only the lodge-gate, and there is a long, but on the whole an easy, drive before India is reached. From the Indian point of view, Kandahar is more important, while Kabul as the capital is by far the most important of all. Herat cannot be defended for long against attack; and, if war breaks out, it would be prudent to destroy the fortifications and to remove all stores. The invader may be delayed, but he cannot well be stopped before he reaches the Helmund. If, indeed, Afghanistan is to be defended, Kabul and Kandahar must be held in force. Large British armies must be thrown into their neighborhood, and this cannot be done without railways. Afghanistan is a miserably poor country. Every patch of fertile land is cultivated and the food-products barely suffice for the sparse population. Those who remember the operations of 1878-80 will never forget the enormous difficulties which attended the supply of our troops in Afghanistan, yet they were a mere handful compared with the armies which will be required if we be called upon to assist the Amir in repelling a foreign enemy. The supplies must come from India; and, if we push our railways to the furthestmost points of

our frontier, it will be most difficult to feed our troops unless the railways be carried to Kandahar and to the neighborhood of Kabul. We are confronted with a dilemma. It is quite possible that, when Afghanistan is invaded from the northwest, the Amir and the majority of his people will turn to us for assistance. They know that we have no definite intentions of absorbing their country and of pushing further west. And they equally know that Russia has very definite intentions of reducing Afghanistan to the status of a Khanate as a preliminary to the conquest of India. But it is no use turning to us too late, no use asking us to undertake an impossible task. What can Lord Kitchener count on if he enters Afghanistan? He will find no supplies. What will he find in the way of trained soldiers and munitions of war? We know little of the Amir's regular army or of the output of the ordnance-factory. Some guess that the regular army consists of about 70,000 men; and all say that the regiments are without capable officers, and that the guns, rifles and ammunition, whether imported or manufactured at Kabul, are jealously and timidly withheld from the troops. It is an unknown quantity, and Lord Kitchener cannot count on useful auxiliaries; nor, indeed, can he afford to discount the rabble of Afghan fighting-men as possible guerrilla opponents. It seems so obvious that the Amir—alive, at last, to the danger threatened by Russian railways—should hasten to ask us for officers to take stock of his arsenals, to train his regiments in musketry, and to advise as to the fortifications which will be essential for effective resistance. But here the Amir is met by a dilemma. Boastful and conceited as is the Afghan, he knows that the British adviser has an awkward way of becoming a dictator. The Amir has inherited many of his father's ideas, and he knows that British assistance must mean a British protectorate. There is something almost pathetic about the expression used in the agreement of 1893. We wish to see Afghanistan "independent and strong." The Amir wishes to be "independent and strong," but he realizes that it is a contradiction in terms. He can only be strong for the purpose of repelling Russian invasion if he has British troops and British officers and agents *permanently* located in Afghanistan, and he and his people know that such strength is incompatible with independence. At all points of the problem there are dilemmas and difficulties; and it is well to remember

this fact, and to bear with the Amir in his difficulties with patience and consideration.

One of the wisest men who ever helped to make Empire in India once wrote:

"You wish the red line of England on the map to advance no further. But to enable this red line to retain its present position—to prevent its being drawn back or erased from the map—it is, it appears to me, absolutely necessary to occupy posts in advance of it. I cannot see how, consistently with safety, it can ever be otherwise with regard to a great Empire held by a foreign Government, as we hold India. A severe struggle within our established limits with a powerful invader—although attended with immediate success to us . . . might render it necessary to maintain large armies in the field in the interior of our dominions for a protracted period, in order to restore that internal tranquillity which might not be in the least disturbed even by many battles fought beyond our frontier."

It is more than fifty years since General John Jacob wrote these words, and India has changed, and some of the outposts in advance of the red line of those days have been occupied, but many still hold to the policy enunciated while railways were still in their infancy. Lord Kitchener has to deal with a larger and more difficult problem than that which faced General Jacob and the great men of that time. It is true that he has a larger and far more efficient army than existed in the fifties; he has railways, and rapid communications with Great Britain, and he has, it may be hoped, a far more peaceful India to police and to defend than was the India which passed from the Company to the Crown. The *Pax Britannica* has transformed British India, and has changed the aspect of the vast territory—some 680,000 square miles—which still remains under the rule of the Indian Princes. These are no longer interesting historical survivals, or doubtful factors to be jealously watched, but in many cases are active colleagues of the British administration, contributing towards the defence of India by the maintenance of highly efficient regiments known as the "Imperial Service Troops." If proof were wanted of the peace of internal India, we need only look back a few years, when the Indian garrison was depleted by 31,000 men for Imperial purposes in South Africa and China. It was a time when British prestige suffered an eclipse, but no sign of unrest was visible in India.

Long before Lord Kitchener took up the high office of Commander-in-chief in India, the character of the Indian Army was changing. Originally a force for the preservation of peace within India and for repelling raids on the frontiers, it has for many years been quietly prepared for the larger eventuality of meeting a civilized Power. Gradually, the hardier soldiers of the North have been substituted for the gentler and less efficient races of the South, and the sepoy is now recruited, not for the easy duties of the Indian garrison, but for the more trying conditions of the frontier and beyond. Rigid economist as he is reputed to be, Lord Kitchener cannot solve the problem formulated by Mr. Balfour without increasing the expenditure on the Indian Army, and the figures steadily grow—fourteen millions sterling in 1900, sixteen millions in 1902, and an estimate of over nineteen millions in 1904. If we look at the size of India, larger than Europe if we exclude Russia; if we look to the population, some 300 millions of people; and if we look to the enormous trade rising by leaps and bounds—nineteen millions does not seem a heavy sum to pay for insurance; but it represents nearly one-fourth of the total revenues of India. A large share in the increase is due to the rise in pay of the British troops—a very doubtful measure, for which Lord Kitchener and the Indian Government are in no way responsible. The remainder is due to the change in the status of the army, from occupation and police to defence, and we find that the chief items are armament, stores, transport and mobilization. Lord Kitchener does not increase his army, but he increases its efficiency. If we include the Imperial Service troops and the Volunteers—a small force under 30,000 men—Lord Kitchener has an army of 203,000 Indians and over 74,000 British regulars. He can increase his Indian troops if he can find the money and if he can simultaneously add to his British force—for the most elementary principle of our Indian administration is that, both in peace and in war, the British soldier should be close to the Indian sepoy, and that the sepoys should not outnumber the soldiers by more than two to one. Another axiom of the Indian military system is that the artillery should—with the exception of a few mountain batteries—be British. Both these limitations cramp the power of expansion; but, civilized as India is becoming, Lord Kitchener still has good recruiting-grounds, and the Sikhs, Ghoorkas, Pathans, Punjabi Mohammedans, and

Docras, properly trained and well led, will hold their own with any fighting-men in the world. Lord Kitchener has also splendid material for irregular cavalry in the warrior caste of Rajputana, and an endless supply for irregular infantry as he draws near the country of the frontier. But he wants officers. It would not be over the mark to say that for his existing army, and for irregular forces, which might be usefully employed if India had to be defended against a foreign army, more than one thousand officers in addition to the present strength would be required. They must know the languages and the customs of the Indian races, and they cannot be improvised at a moment's notice.

We do not propose to discuss in detail Lord Kitchener's reforms. They are based on the latest experience and the most recent military science, and they aim at making the heterogeneous forces of India uniform, efficient, and ready in peace time to pass into a state of war. Many of his schemes will take time. He wishes to create real native officers possessed of initiative and independence; and, if he succeeds, he will add enormously to the strength of the Indian army. He is straining every effort to make his army self-contained, and in a short time he will cease to depend on Great Britain for his guns, rifles and ammunition. But he must still depend on Great Britain for his British troops, and at this point the responsibility of the Commander-in-chief ceases, and the grave duty of the Defence Committee begins. Lord Kitchener is ready to arrest temporarily the advance of the invader; but, whether his task be the defence of Afghanistan or, as some suppose, the easier task of defending the frontier of India, he must look to Great Britain for reinforcements. If, in spite of the suicidal and suspicious policy of Kabul, we are bound in honor to advance beyond our frontier, "to occupy posts in front of it," we shall want larger and still larger reinforcements; and, even before mobilization, the British army in India should be greatly increased if Lord Kitchener is to maintain the due proportion between the Indian and the British troops, both in the field armies and in the obligatory garrisons scattered throughout India. It is useless to form estimates of the reinforcements which will be required, or to theorize as to when these reinforcements can arrive from oversea. Calculations have been made, nice calculations, as to the exact number of divisions which must be in certain positions within four months

after the outbreak of war; but it is one thing to calculate, and another to move troops through a barren and probably hostile country. Till the moment comes, no one can say how many regiments will be required to keep up our communications with Chitral and to watch the Waziris; but, to take a concrete instance, Lord Kitchener would have to lock up four brigades of his exiguous force to keep open the twenty-five miles of the Khyber Pass for the advance of his divisions to Kabul. If it is to be done, it must be done on a magnificent scale, and Great Britain must find the men and the money. The defence of Afghanistan is an Imperial matter, and it must be in the main accomplished by British troops. Few who have not served in the inhospitable country of the Amir can realize the hardships of campaigning in that mountainous and infertile region, or can imagine the miseries of the climate—the heat of the passes, and the cold of the plateau. If the campaign be protracted, it is no country for Indian troops. And, if it be done on a grand scale, railways are essential; and with railways the independence of Afghanistan, as understood by the Afghans, will disappear. Railways would civilize the country, and would achieve in one year what our policy has failed to accomplish in half a century; and, if the Amir wishes to see his country strong and in harmony with the times, he must accept the inexorable fact that the advance of civilization must be met by the arts of civilization.

So far as finances and the political conditions of India and Afghanistan will allow, Lord Kitchener will do his part in the problem. He will push his railways to the foot of the Peiwar Kotal and towards the Kabul River beyond Peshawar. He will have every available soldier and gun ready for an advance—it may be for a race—to certain strategic points in Afghanistan; but he must look back anxiously to India itself, to Great Britain and to the sea. At the best, his preliminary task will be difficult, dangerous, and, owing to the Afghan character, thankless; but there is complete confidence in India that this great soldier, with his splendid record of success, will succeed. Even in his preparation, he is beset with dilemmas. Preparation for such a campaign as is now in men's minds is costly, and it may involve an increase of taxation in India. The margin is perilously small, and one turn of the screw might raise political difficulties in India most hampering and embarrassing.

What does the taxpayer in Great Britain think of the problem? Eventually, he must pay the bill and find the fighting-men for the defence of Afghanistan. Knowing little of the facts, which have been weighed by the Defence Committee, he will look at the map and scratch his head doubtfully as he gazes at the Indian rhomboid. He may ask whether the problem of the defence of the British Empire might not be limited to the defence of India. As he runs his eye down the map and sees Seistan (commanding the Helmund River and the route from Herat to Kandahar) and the Persian Gulf, he may have the uneasy feeling that, if he guarantees Afghanistan to-day, he may logically be invited to guarantee Persia to-morrow. "Where," he will ask, "is the policy of outpost in advance of the red line to end?" This year it may be Kandahar, Ghuzni and Kabul; but Russia's railway activities may turn the flank of Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and force us into holding a line from Seistan to Bunder Abbas. Again, German enterprise in the direction of Bagdad may necessitate some countermove. Will England pay? Assuredly, India can neither find the money nor the willing sepoy for service in regions so remote and uncongenial.

Such a critic, lacking the full knowledge of the Defence Committee, will urge that we have a fairly useful frontier which might be rendered most formidable if we dealt with the tribes once and for all, and created another Quetta on the highlands of Tirah. He looks upon the easy entrance of Russia into Herat and Afghan Turkestan, unhindered by hostile tribes, as a foregone conclusion; and he would rather await the shock on the Indian frontier with troops secure, confident and well supplied.

We may feel very sure that the Defence Committee has anxiously considered the respective advantages of the definite inner line, and the unfortunately indefinite outer line of resistance, and in deciding for the latter is well assured that it is the safer and the cheaper course.

But, inasmuch as it will involve sacrifice on the part of Great Britain in money and men, it would be wise if Government would take the nation into its confidence and would explain why Afghanistan must be defended. The explanation might, among other important matters, refer to the following considerations. We are bound by no treaty with the Amir to defend Afghanistan,

but we are party to an international understanding with Russia which in 1885 only aimed at "contributing to the establishment of peace and security" in the Amir's possessions. We are not embarking on a policy of adventure and advance, but are compelled, alike by our prestige and self-interest, to sterilize the glacis of India as long as possible, and to resist the humiliation of being ousted from spheres where our influence has been established and our interests materialized. If we contracted our spheres of influence, the peoples of India and our frontier neighbors would ascribe such action to weakness and bad faith. Such contraction would not in the long run tend to the easy or economical defence of India. If we allow Russia to occupy the glacis, the military burdens of India and of conscript Great Britain will be permanent and grievous. If we strike, and strike effectually, at the foe when, after violating the frontier, he approaches the defensible positions of Afghanistan, the military burden will be heavy indeed, but temporary. We may help the Amir with the loan of officers for his regiments. These may hold the passes to the North; but Lord Kitchener will fulfil his duty to India and to Afghanistan if he can stand firm on the Kabul-Ghuzni-Kandahar line. He will have the tribes behind him, and in front an enemy embarrassed by difficulties of supply and harassed by a fanatic and furious nation of marksmen mountaineers. Some would counsel half measures and suggest partition, the easy southern part of Afghanistan falling to us, and the more difficult northern country being left to Russia; but we should lose prestige in India and earn the lively hatred of Afghanistan by such an arrangement, and should be making over to Russia the only material of value in the Amir's dominions—the fighting-men of the north. Partition may some day prove inevitable, but we should not work for it. There are only two alternatives. The first is to hold our present frontier, strengthened by the bastion of Tirah, and to hold the Persian Gulf as a British lake, leaving the crumbling kingdoms of Islam to their fate. The second is to defend the irreducible minimum of territory which is required for the purposes of buffer in Afghanistan and in Persia.

ANGLO-INDIAN.